



Reintroduction of Cheetah

Why in News

Recently, the Union Minister for Environment, Forests and Climate Change has launched the **'Action Plan for Introduction of Cheetah in India'** under which 50 of these big cats will be introduced in the next five years.

- The action plan was launched at the 19th meeting of the [National Tiger Conservation Authority \(NTCA\)](#).
 - NTCA is a **statutory body** under the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change.
- Last year (2021), the [Supreme Court](#) lifted its seven-year-long stay on a proposal to introduce African Cheetahs from Namibia into the Indian habitat.

Key Points

▪ About:

- 'Reintroduction' of a species means **releasing it in an area where it is capable of surviving**.
- Reintroductions of large carnivores have increasingly been recognised as a **strategy to conserve threatened species** and restore ecosystem functions.
 - The cheetah is the only large carnivore that has been eliminated, mainly by over-hunting in India in historical times.
- The conservation of the cheetah will **revive grasslands and their biomes and habitat**, much like [Project Tiger](#) has done for forests and all the species that have seen their numbers go up.

▪ Reasons for the Extinction:

- Hunting, diminishing habitat and non-availability of enough prey - black buck, gazelle and hare - led to the extinction of the cat in India (1952).
- The advent of [climate change](#) and growing human populations have only made these problems worse.

▪ Reintroduction Action Plan:

- With help from the **Wildlife Institute of India and the Wildlife Trust of India**, the ministry will be **translocating around 8-12 cheetahs from South Africa, Namibia and Botswana**.
 - These countries have the world's largest populations of the animal.
- The big cats will live at **Kuno Palpur National Park (Madhya Pradesh)** owing to its suitable habitat and adequate prey base.


▪ Other Highlights of the NTCA Meeting:

- **Water Atlas:**

- A Water Atlas, **mapping all the water bodies in the tiger-bearing areas** of India has also been released.
- The atlas contains **information about presence of such bodies in several areas**, including the Shivalik Hills and Gangetic plain landscape, Central Indian Landscape and **Eastern Ghats, Western Ghats** landscape, North Eastern Hills and **Brahmaputra** flood plains and **Sundarbans**.
- The atlas has been put together using remote-sensing data and **Geographic Information System (GIS)** mapping.
- It will **provide baseline information to forest managers** to shape their future conservation strategies.
- **Conservation Assured | Tiger Standards (CA|TS) Accreditation:**
 - Fourteen tiger reserves have been accredited under CA|TS, and NTCA is working on getting other reserves evaluated for CA|TS accreditation.
 - CA|TS has been agreed upon as an **accreditation tool by the global coalition of Tiger Range Countries (TRCs)** and has been developed by tiger and protected area experts.

Cheetah

- The cheetah is **one of the oldest of the big cat species**, with ancestors that can be traced back more than five million years to the Miocene era.
- The cheetah is also the **world's fastest land mammal** that **lives in Africa and Asia**.

Sr. No.	Parameter	African Cheetah	Asiatic Cheetah
1.	IUCN status	Vulnerable	Critically Endangered.
2.	CITES status	Appendix-I of the List.	Appendix-I of the List.
3.	Distribution	Around 6,500-7,000 African cheetahs present in the wild.	40-50 found only in Iran.
4.	Physical Characteristics	Bigger in size as compared to Asiatic Cheetah.	Smaller and paler than the African cheetah. Has more fur, a smaller head and a longer neck. Usually have red eyes and they have a more cat-like appearance.
5.	Image		

Source: IE